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## DECORATIVE METAL WORK.

THE application of metals, bronze, iron, steel and brass to the arts of decoration and ornamentation, was almost coincident with the beginning of authentic history, and we find reference to it at the very opening of the chronology of nations. So distant did its origin appear to the early Egyptians that they attributed its introduction to their gods, and urged that such beautiful work and effects as were possible in wrought iron, could never have been devised by the brain of man.

In excavations at Ninevah, ornamental iron work has been uncovered that would be creditable to modern artists, scales, bars embellished with chasing, and many other forms in which iron can be wrought, were in such a preserved condition as to make it possible to distinguish and study their many features. The scarcity of early remnants, however, is natural, as the iron crumbles away and is destroyed by the decomposing qualities of the earth, but this comparative absence of tangible proof must not be considered as evidence against the existence of metals at a period very soon after the reputed formation of the world. Homer frequently refers to iron and brass, Hesiod speaks of them, Diodorus appears to be familiar with their uses, and Pliny goes quite extensively into a description of steel, whilst Rawlinson, in his "Ancient Egyptians," claims that the figures of the priests upon the temples, sharpening the sacrificial knife upon a bar of metal, are intended to be understood as holding in their hand a bar of steel, for it is colored a steel-blue.

In referring to the use made of metals aside from that which naturally suggests itself in the shape of tools and weapons, it will occur to everyone that among the first authentic instances of their employment for ornamental work, was the construction of the gigantic statue of Apollo, known better as the Colossus of Rhodes, which stood one hundred and five feet in height, with one foot resting on either side of the entrance to the Rhodian harbor. This was of bronze, and was intended to excel (as it did) everything of the kind ever attempted.

Some of the most beautiful of metal work may be found upon bells, and many of these have become famed for the magnificence of their decoration. China and Russia have excelled in this one direction, and they have produced the largest as well as the most ornate bells, that have been discovered. The great bell of Moscow, talked about until we are all familiar with it, weighs 444,000 pounds, and is covered with the most delicate ornamentation.

The application of metals to furniture suggested itself as one of the most practical uses to which it might be put, and in ancient Rome, chairs and beds were often framed, not only of bronze, but of

the more precious ores as well. Later the throne of Dagobert was made of bronze, and may to-day be seen in the Louvre, a most interesting study for the lover of this description of art.

Coming to still later times, the fine doors of the Church of Notre Dame are protected by a bronze network, which bears an additional ornamentation in the marks of the bullets fired by the army of Versailles when executing the Communists captured after the riots of 1871.

But the most brilliant effects may be had from iron and steel, and notwithstanding the extreme hardness of these materials, working in them has

to the appearance of those articles which were necessarily made prominent in architectural construction. Among these means damascening appeared to be the most practical and effective, and was practised to an almost unlimited extent. The process is merely a phase of inlaying, grooves are cut in the metal to be damascened, and other metal is forced by pressure into these grooves, and so battered down and welded in as to incorporate it with the body metal itself and form one piece of various colors arranged to compose a number of patterns. This damascened metal was popular for furniture and weapons, and in its manufacture

Venice and Milan became famous, hardly less than Persia herself, though the steel, especially, of this latter country has been celebrated above all other for its exquisite temper and keen edge, and the story is probable, though remarkable, that Saladin throwing a web of the finest silk ravelings in the air, cut it through with his sword before it touched the ground.

In the accompanying cut, from *L'Art pour Tous*, we have shown a plain, simple instance of wrought iron in the shape of a lantern. Its form is of the least elaborated character, and yet it conveys many suggestions; it offers a very acceptable design for a window screen to take the place of the straight up-and-down, ugly things we are accustomed to use as a protection against outside intrusion, and it can be put to many other uses which will suggest themselves to the designer.

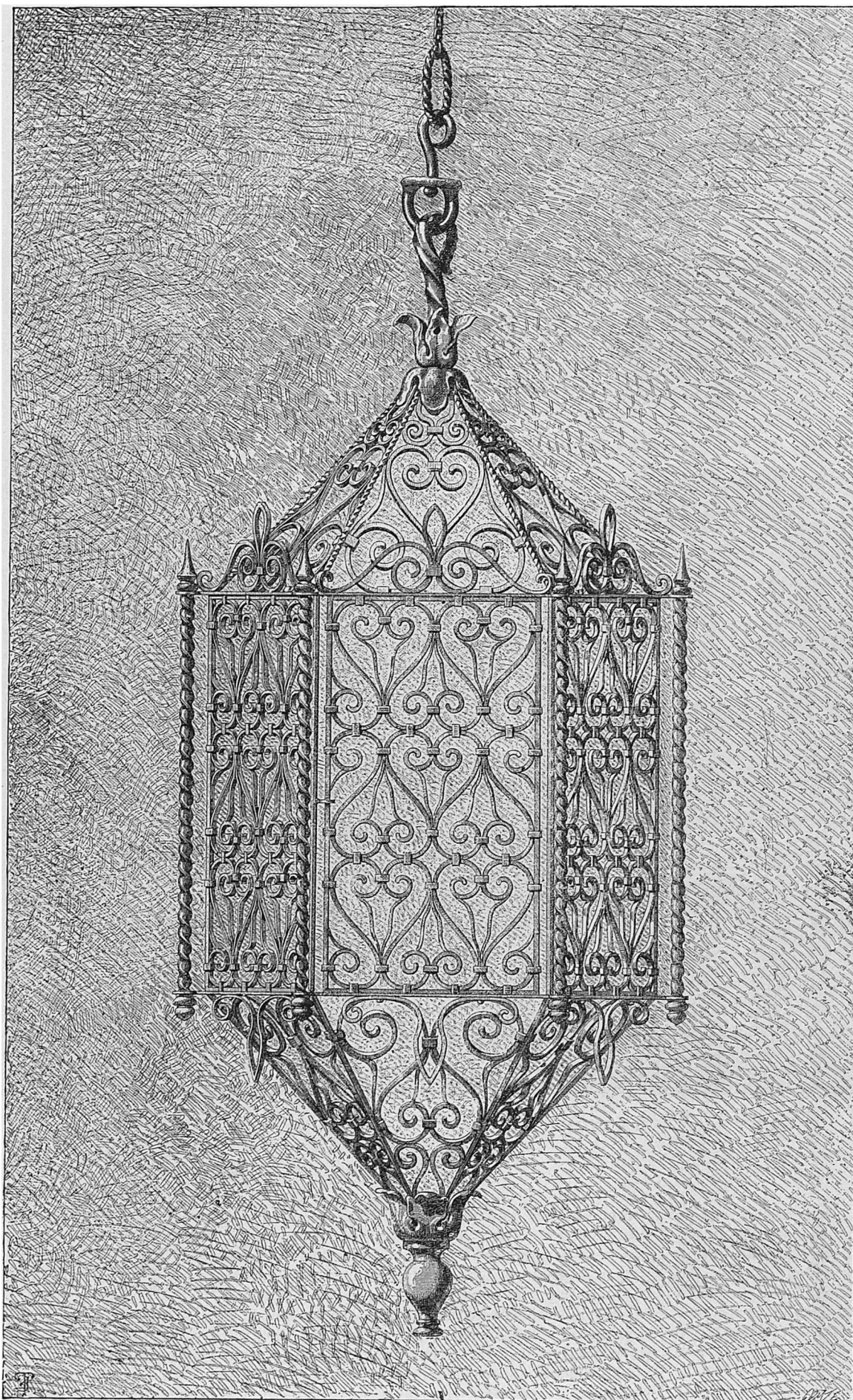
This sort of work is gaining favor again, and we trust we shall see many rich examples of the skill of our modern artists in a direction that opens such flattering possibilities for the display of their talents.

#### PLATE OF FURNITURE DESIGNS.

On page 89 we give a plate of German furniture work, specimens from some of the first manufacturers of Berlin, Mayence and Zurich. We believe this is a feature that will interest many of our readers, inasmuch as it indicates the prevailing taste of the country from which the examples came. It is our purpose to follow this up in various ways, and we will give many illustrations in this manner that will be valuable.

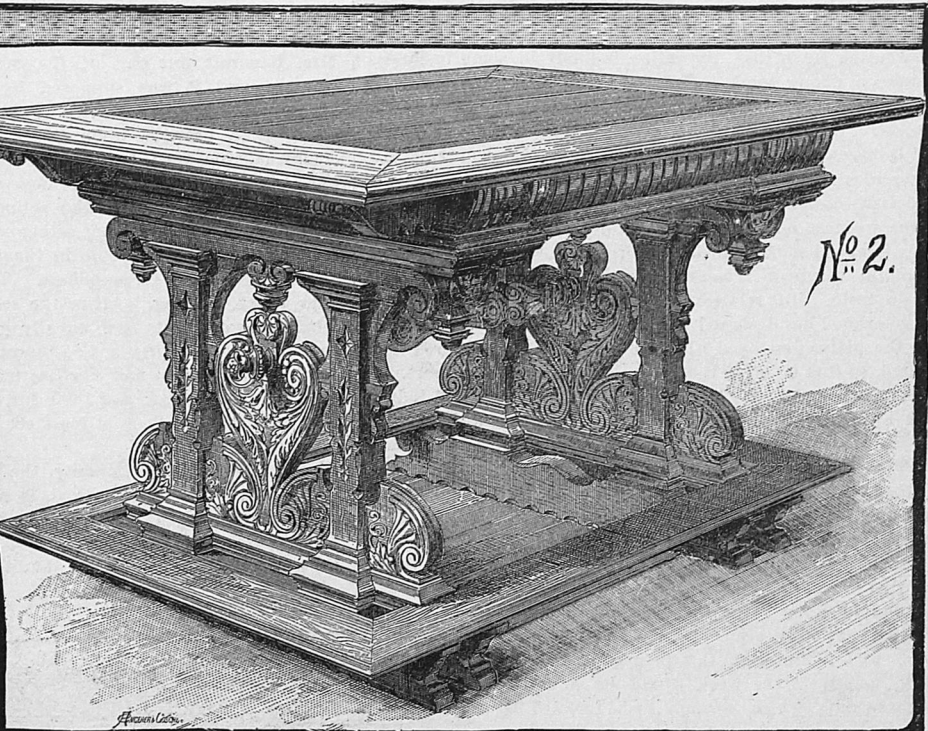
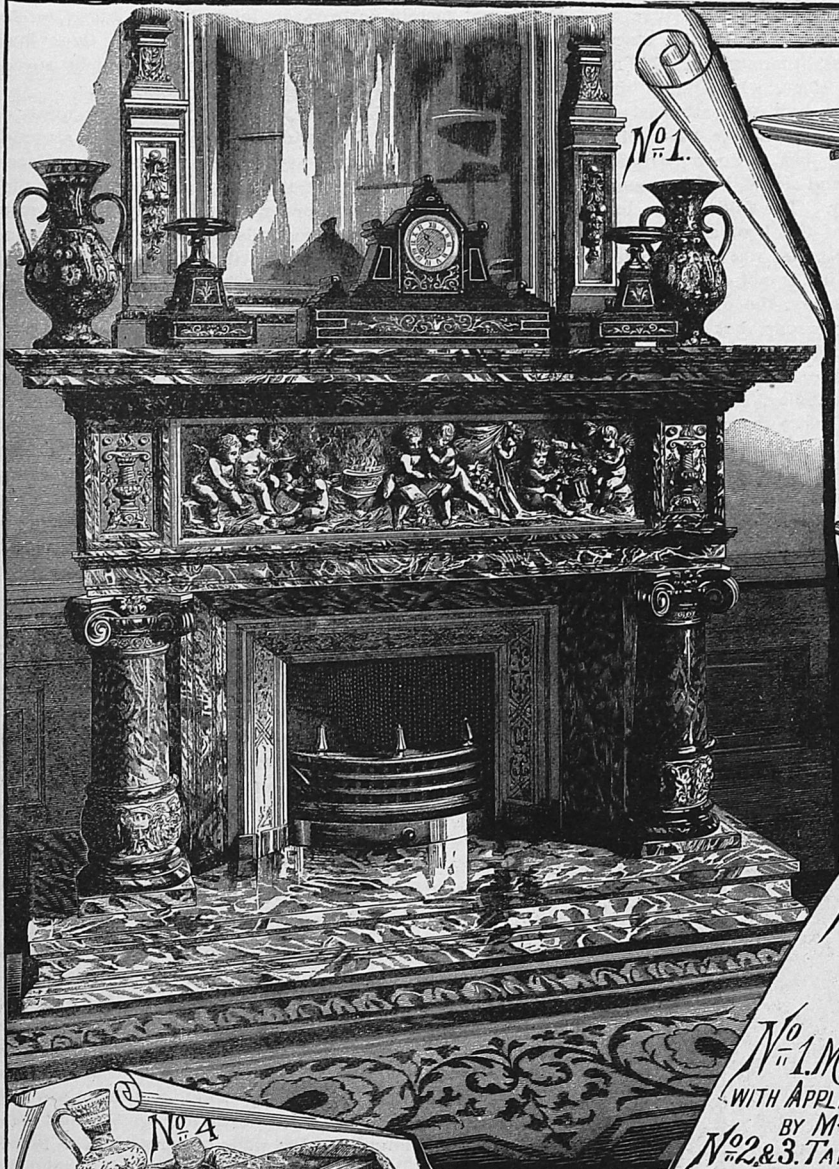
*Harpers* for December has a well written

article on William Black, which gives one an excellent picture of the novelist and his surroundings, and lets one in, in a measure, to his mode of work. An illustrated continued article on Southern California, gives among other cuts a very truthful picture of Main Street, Los Angeles, one of the most genial towns in the country. Havre, France, offers material for an article of considerable statistical and general interest. It seems to us, however, that a sketch of Rue de Paris and the Square in front of the City Hall, would be of really more practical value than the images of fishermen and fisherwomen, who are about the same at Havre as every where else.



always been more or less of a favorite occupation. Hilt of swords and daggers, stocks of Arab guns, gates, railings and furniture have been made, and made with such consummate delicacy and taste as to excite the admiration of the most indifferent critic. The gate shown in our previous number is an excellent example of such work, and the railing in the Louvre, there referred to, is another. Hinges were made spreading out over the walls, and extending far into the centre of the massive oaken door, keys partook more of artist's than locksmith's skill, bolts and locks were converted into rich ornaments instead of clumsy safeguards, and every means was adopted to add





*SPECIMEN'S  
OF  
FINE GERMAN  
CABINET WORK*

*No. 1. MANTEL-PIECE IN ROSSO DI LEVANTE  
WITH APPLIQUE BRONZE ORNAMENT MANUFACTURED  
BY M. L. SCHLEICHER BERLIN.*

*No. 2 & 3. TABLE AND CHAIR MANUFACTURED BY  
TEWES BROTHERS ZURICH.*

*No. 4 & 5. CARVED LIBRARY TABLE, EASY CHAIR AND  
SMALL TABLE DESIGNED AND MANUFACTURED BY  
A. BEMBE MAYENCE.*

*No. 6. CABINET MANUFACTURED BY  
M. SCHULZ BERLIN.*

